Letter No. 98. Thursday - 12th Feb.

Major. J. H. Massey.
6. Talesinian Coy. The Bluffs.
M. E. 7.

My own darling Barbara -

You & I seem to be very unlucky people about letters & things. In spite of the fact that you write to me about three times as often as everybody else put together, I always have later letters & A.Gs. from other people. For example, your last A.G. was dated Jan 12th - & yet today I get one from Dick Blackburn dated Jan 22nd, & your last letter was sent off on Dec 4th - & three days ago. I had one from Vera from Dec 11th.

Vera was just recovering from jaundice, poor dear & had been feeling foul. She is very sweet the way she religiously writes to me every month - & I feel very guilty only replying with A.Gs., so I made a big effort yesterday & wrote her a 4 page letter - writing not too small - & which I hope she will appreciate. She said she was a frightful colour, & looked just like a bottle of curry powder. A large part of my letter was taken up in telling her to persuade you to go & live near her, for the spring & summer anyway, & asking her if she could find some rooms & tell you about them. You have mentioned in two letters that you might go up there, & I do think that it would be a good place for you. Caernarvon is a clean, healthy part of the country, likely to be free from air raids & such troubles: & the town is big enough to provide some shops & cinemas & will not be so lonely & cut off as Ross Mayo. And you like Vera & Martin & their children, they are very fond of you. I really think it would be a good arrangement. If only you & Vera between you can find a place where you would like to live. Your present abode does sound pretty grim & disorganised, & your room

rather miserable!

Saturday - 12th feb. Darling, dearest darling - today it has happened again, & I have written my second application to be posted home on compassionate grounds. The letter about it came in yesterday, & I am now in a complete spin & can think of nothing else - I suppose that this is how I shall be until I get an answer, which will probably not be for another 5-6 weeks. Whatever happens, my darling, you must not be kept in suspense this time, wondering what is happening. So - if successful, I shall immediately cable you & your reply will be opened by me at Ben-Ayi. If unsuccessful, I will send you an A.G. to tell you so. If, by any chance, you get this before any other word of any kind, you must cable at once & ask me what has happened - I will reply at once.

Oh - but I am hoping & praying. For no really good reason, I am much more hopeful this time. But, from what I can gather, my last application at least received serious consideration - so this time, they may just feel browned off with me, but I think that more probably, they will realise that I am very serious about it; & Hughes' certificate will, I feel sure, help matters by providing some outside corroboration. And then, I find that the dates are very auspicious! The letter about it from Palestine H.Q. is dated Feb 5th, which is my birthday; the letter from Area H.Q. forwarding the Palestine letter, is dated Feb 9th, which is your birthday; & I have

applied on 1st 12th — & 5 + 9 = 14! I hope to goodness that the whole thing does not depend on such reckonings - but you must admit that the numbers are quaker remarkable. There is now a new Area Commander & I am no longer under Col K - but I served under the present one in Haifa & I think he knows me well enough to know that I am genuine & truthful - & also that I work hard & am at least deserving on that score.

Now, darling one, as you will see I am enclosing the correspondence in this case.

1. My first application.
2. The reply, saying that H.Q. Ninth Army are unable to grant a vacancy.
3. My present, i.e. second, application.
4. Copy of Hughes' certificate.

If this application of mine is turned down again, I do not see how I can apply again - unless there come about further grounds, which God forbid.

Therefore, if & when you get an A.F. from me to say that I have failed, I want you, if you will, to go to the War Office, & insisting to take no for an answer, find out who is the right man to see. And when you have found him, put all this before him, explain everything, & tell him that as they will not count our case as serious enough out here, you are coming to him, & asking him to secure my posting home. There is such a Department, & there is such an officer, if you

can only find him. Dear Lord, you will probably find him very evasive & full of the difficulties of things – he will probably be quite used to having to face such scenes. But he is paid to do this job, to look into things, & see that a decision is reached by the proper people – so do not be put off. Will you do it, darling?
I cannot see what else I can do, unless I ask for interviews, & try & push myself right up to the very top. I may do that. But it is difficult. For example, the Area Commander says 'no'. I am then unsuccessful, he will not incur, & be displeased with me. And what I have to remember, you too, is that it is mainly a question of shipping space, so the vacancies are few, & so it is a matter of competition. And I am not informed about the grounds of the successful applicants, as opposed to my unsuccessful ones. I do hope they send me home. I am ready to work hard, seriously & be thoroughly useful, as I am perfectly certain I can be – I am sure you agree with that. But, at least, I want to be somewhere near to you, to see you from time to time, to make you happy again & free you from worry; I am dying to see Marie – it is dreadful never to have seen him at all, & apparently to have no hope of seeing him for months & months, & maybe years. I only want to be somewhere near you, so that I can immediately come if anything ever should go wrong. And from time to

time, have a week end leave - & every few months to have a few days leave.
Such. they will be able to see that we have suffered enough - & now we deserve some reward. I shall pray, pray & hope, hope. And apart from that, I must try & stop myself from thinking about it until the reply begins to become due. So, if some of my next few letters say nothing about it at all - you will know that I am avoiding the subject on purpose. But you should have an A.G. first.

Sunday - Feb 15th I resume this letter with a strong desire to go on talking about my application & its chances. But I must not, because really failed down. I just awoke to the fact that I have made it - we are waiting for the result - & in any case, this will probably all be stale news by the time this letter is in your dear hands.
I went up to Jerusalem today, with Ben, to have lunch with Shenkar. Instead of going directly there, we went by way of a place called Ramallah, which is a Christian Arab small town, on top of the Judaean hills, north of Jerusalem. We only stopped there for a few minutes & had a coffee in a funny little place, where the proprietor treated us as honoured guests & refused to take any money. They are like that, the Arabs - whereas I have never had anything like that from the Jews, except when I have been to a Kibutz for a meal. Look round with Ben. But I cannot stop now to discuss the Jewish Arab question - it is so complicated - I am really muddled about it, & of course I cannot help being rather biased.
In Jerusalem, I first of all went to a shop to

to buy John Senior a prayer book. But they only had R.C. ones - & the Bibles all inlaid with mother of pearl, were too dear at the cheapest - so I will just write him an Ag. instead. But I cannot resist buying you a present, darling - this time more "jolly". It is a set! - ring, bracelet, necklace, brooch, & earrings - all Jewish silver wire work. The stones are Jordan stones which are flat & rather like marble. It was not at all expensive. I think they are really very pretty. I do hope that you like them. The word thing about them is that the earrings & clasps are so cheap & insecure looking. I can imagine them coming undone rather easily. I know you never wear ear rings - but I am sure you would look very pretty in these. I shall long to hear whether you like them or not.

We then went to the Jewish Agency - which has a large imposing rather good looking building - first of all called on a man called Weiler, who seems to be a sort of adjutant to Shertok, in so far as his dealings with the Army are concerned. He is a very pleasant young man, comes from Liverpool, & has a rather pale moody wife, who comes from Hampstead Park where Tatty & Jo: go seeing a great deal. We were shown round the building - which mainly consisted of being shown Herzl's room. Have you heard of him? He was the founder of Zionism - began his work after the Dreyfus trial in Paris, when as a journalist, he was so impressed with the anti Semitic demonstrations. He made up his mind to find a solution for the Jewish people. He began from nothing at all, & founded a

movement embracing millions, before he died from heart failure at the age of 44. This room is an exact replica of Herzl's room in Vienna, with all his furniture, books, things. He must have been a man of immense personality, drive & capacity for work - he only began his work on Zionism at the age of 36.

Then we went off to Sharok's house. Ruth took us by way of Mount Scopus, which is the highest part of the Mount of Olives. From there, we first of all had a gorgeous view of the Dead Sea, 3600 feet below & 25 miles away - the Moabite Hills beyond. It was a terrific view, as you can well imagine. Then on the other side, from the steps of the Hebrew University, we were able to look down on the city of Jerusalem & see the whole of it. The old & the new cities - the wall - Golgotha - the garden of Gethsemane - & so on. I am very urgently invited to come back again & really see Jerusalem & I am determined to do this as soon as possible.

At Sharok's house, the party consisted of his wife, who is a very pleasant, kind homely little woman who had been to Reading Agricultural College in 1926 - Ruth & his wife - a Dr Werner Senator, who is something important at the Hebrew University & to do with education in the Jewish Agency (he & I had already corresponded, as he was Dr Gergel's guardian) - Ben & myself. They have three children, between the ages of 8 & 12 or so, but they only floated in for our cocktails. It was a very pleasant lunch & the conversation was general & cheerful & interesting. Sharok is

an extremely pleasant interesting man + speaks very
lovely English - he is entirely free of airs or any
importance which is very pleasant, considering his
position which is akin to a foreign Secretary
I was invited I suppose as the C.O. of a French
unit - ; also I think they want to convert as many
Englishmen as possible to Zionism - which you must
understand has nothing at all to do with being
a Jew. Lord Balfour & Lloyd George, for example,
are ardent Zionists (pronunciation that sounds
awful - but it's too late now - I saw it coming & I
could not avoid it).

I have just this minute heard Churchill's speech
on the wireless following our loss of Singapore.
It was a marvellous speech. Now this + our loss of
Egypt in the W.D. + the German battle cruisers
getting home through the channel is quite a
lot to have to contend all at once. But I
still feel very confident - America has still to play
her part - Russia is doing magnificently - & we are
at last getting into concentrated lines of action instead
of being so strung out, this should lead to initiative
from our side.

Just one thing, in case I am posted home darling -
I shall carry with me a letter saying why, &
so I am certain there cannot be any chance
of my being whisked off somewhere else as soon
as I arrived - or even at all. And now to
bed - to pray & hope & think of you darling.
All of my everlasting love as always! - Your own [illegible]

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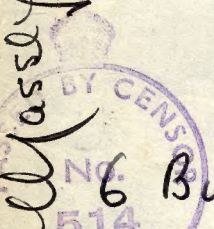
Mrs Barbara Massey.

T. Massey



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